

Old and New London: Volume 6 (1878), pp. 269-286. from <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45281>

CHAPTER XXI. CAMBERWELL.

"Hæ latebræ dulces, et jam, si credis, amœnæ."—*Horace*.

Antiquity of the Parish—Its Etymology—Its Condition at the Time of the Conquest—Descent of the Manor—Sir Thomas Bond's House—The Bowyer Family—Bowyer Lane, now Wyndham Road—The Royal Flora Gardens—St. Giles's Church—The Burial—place of Mrs. Wesley, and of "Equality" Brown—Camden Chapel—St. George's Church—The Vestry Hall—Camberwell Green—Camberwell Fair—Abolition of the Fair, and the Green converted into a Park—The "Father Redcap"—The Old House on the Green—The Green Coat and National Schools—The Camberwell Free Grammar School—The Aged Pilgrims' Friend Asylum—Rural Character of Camberwell in the Last Century—Myatt's Farm—Cold Harbour Lane—Denmark Hill Grammar School—Grove Hill and Dr. Lettsom's Residence there—The Story of George Barnwell—Grove Hall—The "Fox-under-the-Hill"—Old Families of Camberwell—Tom Hood a Resident here—Camberwell Lunatic Asylum.

Camberwell is now so truly part and parcel of the metropolis that it would be impossible to write an account of London south of the Thames without some notice of its past and present history. No one, we are told, can assert at what period the parish became an inhabited spot. Local antiquaries find pleasure in tracking the path of the Roman conquerors of Britain across the hills and valleys which surround the metropolis. Their legions, as we know, had various camps in the neighbourhood of Londinium, and it is not improbable that they formed one on the pretty hill, known in later days as Ladlands, or Primrose Hill, best reached from Camberwell by way of Dog-kennel Lane, in the southern part of the parish. It must have been a commanding position in those days, when the Thames at high tide expanded into a vast lake, reaching to the base of the rounded Surrey hills, near which were marshes inhabited by bitterns, herons, and other waterfowl. Herne Hill, in this neighbourhood, by the way, is thought by some to have been originally Heron Hill, "heron" being the old orthography.

Coming down to times the history of which is more defined and authentic, we find Camberwell mentioned in Domesday Book as a manor of some value. The name is written "Ca'brewelle," and the adjoining manor, Peckham, is described as "Pecheha." In subsequent records we meet with "Camerwell," "Cambwell," and "Kamwell." Some etymologists trace the first portion of the name to the British *ownm hir*, long valley; and suppose that the last syllable has reference to some springs of water, at one time famous. This may be the case, for there are, or were, mineral springs at Dulwich, Norwood (the Beulah Spa is memorable), and other places in the neighbourhood. It may be added that, as the parish church has been dedicated from Saxon times to St. Giles, the especial patron of cripples, it has been suggested that there were certain springs in the neighbourhood possessing salutary virtues for persons so afflicted; and that as the old British word *cam* signifies "crooked," Camberwell may simply mean "the well of the crooked." Within the last century or so three ancient wells were discovered in a field in the parish, but they were covered in again by the owner of the land.

At the time of the Conquest, Camberwell is described as being "large and well inhabited." Its inhabitants were cottars and men of a lower grade, ceorls or churls. There was so much wood and waste ground in the neighbourhood that the lord of the manor had paid to him a rent of sixty fat hogs, which were fed on the beech-masts and acorns which abounded in the neighbourhood. There were, besides, sixty-three acres of meadow-land, and, as we have said, a church. In the Saxon times there was but one manor here, which was held of Edward the Confessor by Haims, "Viscount," or Count Depute, of Brixton Hundred, or, as some writers have it, Sheriff of Surrey. Somewhat later we hear of the manor of Pecheha, or Peckham,

being granted to William's half-brother, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, who sub-let to the Bishop of Lisieux. There were also other manors of Bretynghurst, Dovedale (D'Ovedale, or Dowdale), Camberwell, Frierne, Basyng, Hatcham, Cold Herbergh, and Milkwell. William, Earl of Gloucester, natural son of Henry I., who possessed a portion of the original Camberwell manor, including Peckham, gave the church to the monks of Bermondsey, but the manor remained in the family until the year 1350. Margaret, daughter and heiress of Hugh, the then earl, married Ralph, the first Earl of Stafford, whose descendant became Duke of Buckingham. The manor was then named CamberwellBuckingham, and remained the property of the family until Edward, Duke of Buckingham, was attainted and beheaded in 1521. After passing through various hands, it was purchased in 1583 by one Edmund Bowyer, whose descendants yet retain a considerable portion of it. The manors of Bretynghurst, Basyng, and Dovedale were so named from their original possessors, and the brethren of the hospital of St. Thomas, Southwark, held the manor of Milkwell, and subsequently granted it to the church of St. Mary Overie. After the suppression of religious houses it was granted to Sir Thomas Wyatt, who, as we know, was beheaded for his attempted rebellion, in the first year of Queen Mary's reign.

The main road from Kent, intersecting the eastern portion of the parish, was known in the fourteenth century as Bretynghurst or Dredynghurst Road; and afterwards as Kinges Street, because along that thoroughfare the royal and state processions passed on their way from Kent to London and Westminster.



OLD CAMBERWELL CHURCH IN 1750.

Camberwell is described by Priscilla Wakefield, in her "Perambulations," published in 1809, as a "pleasant retreat for those citizens who have a taste for the country whilst their avocations daily call them to town."

In the Domesday Book this parish is called "Ca'berwelle." Subsequently the letter *b* was changed, and from the eleventh to the sixteenth century the name of the parish is generally written in official documents as Camwell, Cammerwell, or Camerwell. In the seventeenth century, as Mr. Blanch informs us in his "History of the Parish," the *b* found its way back again; but it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that Camberwell, as it is now written, was officially and locally recognised. Lysons, in his "Environs of London," writes, "I can find nothing satisfactory with respect to its etymology; the termination seems to point out some remarkable spring; a part of the parish is called Milkwell, and a mineral water was discovered some years ago [1739] near Dulwich." There was formerly a fine brick well on the De Crespigny estate, on Denmark Hill; but Dr. Lettsom, whose villa on Grove Hill we shall have occasion to notice presently, laid claim to the honour of possessing in his grounds the identical well from which this parish derived its appellation. Salmon, the Surrey historian, says, "It seems to be named from some mineral water which was anciently in it;" and Bray adopts the same idea. The author of "A Short Historical and Topographical Account of St. Giles's Church"—the parish church of Camberwell—writes, "It has been conjectured that, as the name of St. Giles conveys an idea of cripples, the well which gave part of the name to the village might have been famous for some medicinal virtues, and might have occasioned the dedication of the church to this patron saint of cripples and mendicants." "This interpretation," adds Mr. Blanch, "is not by any means an improbable one, and it assists us somewhat in the solution of the first part of the name. Given the well, it does not call for a violent exercise of our imaginative faculties to suppose it to be 'cambered' over for protection. Again, 'cam' is a very crooked word, and is applied to anything out of square, or out of condition. Having regard, therefore, to the fact

already noticed, that the church is dedicated to the patron saint of cripples, we are certainly justified in assuming the word 'cam' to be in this instance descriptive of individual condition; and the well would then become the well of the 'crooked' or crippled."



BOWYER HOUSE.

Other solutions of the etymology of Camberwell have been advanced. Here is one by the author of "London: How it Grew:"—"All honour to St. Giles, whose miraculous springs gave a name to the spot; unless, indeed, our friends in the parish will accept a theory of our own—that, as Camber was the name of a son of the Trojan Brute who is said to have conquered this tight little island about 4,000 years ago, perhaps that prince discovered the wells, as Prince Bladud did the waters of Bath, and so unwittingly handed his name down to posterity and the panels of omnibuses."

The name of the place is often pronounced as "Camerwell," and is so written by Evelyn. Under date of September 1, 1657, the diarist writes, "I visited Sir Edmund Bowyer at his melancholie seate at *Camerwell*."

Evelyn mentions in his "Diary," in 1685, an urn full of bones, which had been dug up at Camberwell in repairing a highway, being exhibited at a meeting of the Royal Society, for at that date the Society of Antiquaries did not exist; "it was found," he tells us, "entire with its cover, amongst many others believed to be truly Roman and ancient." No doubt, in the present day a more exact account would have been placed on record.

The most ancient part of the village is that which surrounds what till lately was the Green; but the more pleasant and favourite spot is the Grove, which stands high, and commands pleasant views over Dulwich, as we shall presently see. Of the old sites of Camberwell very few now remain. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there were many good houses in the parish. The Scotts, who held the manor of Camberwell, had a noble mansion and fine grounds at the foot of the Grove. The Muschamps, who possessed the Peckham estate, lived in the manor-house near the High Street. The house was pulled down in the reign of Charles II. by Sir Thomas Bond, who, in 1672, built on the site a very fine mansion, surrounded by a tastefully laid-out garden, famed for the number of its foreign fruit-trees, which attracted the notice of John Evelyn, who, it may be presumed, frequently walked over, being a friend of the family, from his residence at Saye's Court.

He speaks of it as "a new and fine house by Peckham." "It stands," he adds, "on a flat; but has a fine garden and prospect through the meadows to London." The house had a north frontage, and was approached under a canopy of stately elms, "at the end of which was a beautiful prospect, terminated by a view of St. Paul's and the Tower of London. The beauties of this prospect were greatly increased by the masts of the ships being seen over the trees as far as Greenwich." The centre of the garden was, it is stated, like "a wilderness"—a name by which the place was known down till the early part of the present century. Bond was a devoted adherent of the Stuarts, and, at the abdication of James II., followed his master to France. His house was plundered by the Whig mob, and his beautiful gardens laid waste. In

1797 the house was pulled down. Many houses built on the site of Sir Thomas Bond's gardens are now known as Hill Street.

The Bowyer family, who occupy a distinguished place in the annals of Camberwell, settled there in the time of Henry VIII. The family mansion, the manor-house of Camberwell-Buckingham, which stood on the right-hand side of the road from London to Camberwell Green, was built apparently about the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Evelyn, as stated above, in recording a visit paid to Sir Edmund Bowyer, speaks of his mansion as a "melancholie seate." "He has," says the author of "Sylva," "a very pretty grove of oakes, and hedges of yew in his garden, and a handsome row of tall elms before his court." These trees were specially noticeable from the high road. "No vestige of the elms or oaks," says Mr. Blanch, "have been seen by the 'oldest inhabitant,' but a ring of yew-trees stood round the front lawn very recently. It will be noticed," he adds, "that Evelyn says nothing of the fine cedar which, at the beginning of the present century, formed a conspicuous feature to the left of the grand entrance."

There is a tradition that Sir Christopher Wren resided here during the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral, and that some of the frescoes with which the rooms were adorned were painted by Sir James Thornhill. It is also asserted that James II. was concealed here for some time previous to his escape.

Early in the present century much of the beauty of the interior of Bowyer House was destroyed, the owner removing several choice carvings and ornaments. A substantial wall and iron railings were erected about the same time. Later on, the old mansion became tenanted by the Camberwell Literary and Scientific Institution; and it was subsequently converted into a school for young ladies. The house was pulled down in 1861, on its being purchased by the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway Company. Bowyer Lane, now Wyndham Road, long preserved the memory of the old family. This thoroughfare forms a connecting link between the Old and New Camberwell Roads, and is near the boundary line between the parishes of Camberwell and Newington. Freeman's Mill (see page 276), close by Bowyer Lane, was a picturesque old wooden building, and was formerly a conspicuous parochial boundary-mark. Early in the present century Bowyer Lane was the abode of questionable characters of all sorts. Greenacre lived here in 1836—the year of the murder now associated with his name; and it is stated that the body of a man who was executed for horse-stealing was for some time exhibited by the family living in Bowyer Lane at a shilling a head.

The Royal Flora Gardens, in the Wyndham Road, formed for some time a favourite resort for the pleasure-seekers of South London during the summer months. Their most prosperous period was about the year 1849, when the gardens were well laid out and brilliantly illuminated; but the reputation of the place speedily declined, and it met the fate of all such speculations.

The old church, dedicated to St. Giles, was an antique and rude structure, the body large and shapeless, with a square tower surmounted by a turret. It is described by Priscilla Wakefield, in the year 1809, as "an ancient structure, though its appearance has been much modernised by coats of plaster and rough-cast. The south aisle," she adds, "was greatly enlarged lately by an additional brick building, and the whole has been repaired and ornamented."

The first church of Camberwell is one of the very few of which we have authentic mention in "Domesday Book," and is considered by some to have dated its erection from within sixty years of the first landing of St. Augustine, or about the middle of the seventh century. In the reign of King Stephen, 1152, the original structure underwent extensive changes, and two years afterwards became subject to the abbey of St. Saviour, Bermondsey, by gift of William de Mellent. It has been conjectured by some topographers that portions of this church existed down to the time of its destruction by fire in 1841. Lysons, however, fixes the date of the old building towards the beginning of the reign of Henry VIII., at which period the entire edifice was either so completely altered as to lose its original character, or rebuilt on the site of the former church, which had been granted to the monks of Bermondsey. In confirmation of this view Mr. Blanch states that, in preparing the foundation of the new church, the foundations of two former structures were distinctly visible.

The old church was a large edifice, with a "lady chapel," and contained many interesting monuments, brasses, and painted windows. It would be difficult to estimate the amount spent at different times in altering, enlarging, beautifying, and repairing St. Giles's Church, from the time when the first entry occurs in the vestry minutes in 1675; for from that date down to the time of its destruction by fire in 1841, the condition of the church appears to have been the principal theme discussed by the parishioners "in vestry assembled." Under date of September 14, 1675, the following entry appears on the vestry records:—"Upon examination of the charges for the repairing the parish church, it was consented to and ordered, that the sum of Fifty pounds be raysed forthwith by way of tax for that purpose, and the payment of some arrears due for former reparations which was allowed, and to be included in this tax of £50, and to be paid accordingly, and to be brought on account in the churchwardens' accounts, as also that the present churchwardens shall give an account how the sum of £50 hath been expended." This sum, it appears, was found insufficient for the repairs, and so in 1679 an order was made for an additional £40, "for mending the seats, bells, and windows, and for buying prayer-books and a surplice;" and soon after another sum of £40 was voted for a new church clock "and other expenses." There is mention also in 1675 of an agreement entered into between Antony Bowyer, Esq., and Richard Kettlethorpe, whereby the latter undertook to keep St. Giles's clock "going and in good order" for the sum of twenty shillings yearly; but Richard Kettlethorpe apparently found it a more difficult undertaking than he imagined, for, as stated above, a new clock was ordered about four years later.

In 1688 a gallery was built; in 1708 the church was "new pewed, paved, and glazed; three new galleries were erected, and a vault was sunk." In 1786 further additions were made; and in 1799 the building was "beautified," after the usual fashion so dear to vestries and churchwardens; and as parish officers in those days were wholly ignorant of ecclesiastical art, the effect was not brilliant. In 1825 the church was greatly enlarged.

Notwithstanding these various repairs and alterations, the old church retained much of its antiquarian character to the last. The massive clustered columns and pointed arches separating the nave from the side aisles, the venerable sedilia in the south wall of the chancel—which, by the way, had been for many years concealed behind some wainscoting put up in 1715 by the Bowyers—and the fragments of ancient stained glass in its windows, were all vestiges of the olden time.

A fire broke out on the night of Sunday, the 7th of February, 1841, by which the building was completely destroyed. Funds were at once raised for its re-erection. The first stone of the new church was laid in September, 1842, and in November, 1844, the new building was consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester. It was erected from the designs of Messrs. George Gilbert Scott and W. B. Moffatt, at an expense, including furniture, &c., of about £24,000. It is one of the finest and largest of the new parish churches in the kingdom. The style of architecture is the transition between the Early English and the Decorated, which prevailed at the close of the thirteenth century. The building is of a cruciform plan, with a central tower and spire, the latter rising to the height of about 210 feet. The walls of the church, which are of considerable thickness, are constructed chiefly of Kentish rag, with dressings of Caen stone. Several of the windows are enriched with stained glass.

In the old church there was a handsome effigy in brass of Edward Scott, who died in 1537. It is engraved in Hone's "Year-Book," page 913. There was also a monument to Agnes Skinner, or Skuner, who died in 1515, at the age of 119, having survived her husband, it is said, no less than ninetytwo years!

The churchwardens' accounts contain several very curious entries. Thus, in 1809, Mr. Churchwarden Baker paid "John Wilkins, for a vagabond, 3s. 10d.;" "for carrying a vagabond to church, 3s.;" "paid for a coffin and shroud for him, 6s. 6d." The bishop, it seems, was usually regaled with "biscuits and wine" when he came to preach at Camberwell; but in the above-mentioned year, Mr. Churchwarden Davis makes the following entry: "Paid for meat and drink for the bishop, 2s. 6d."

Among the notabilities buried here is Mrs. Wesley, the somewhat shrewish wife of the Rev. John Wesley, who died in 1781. A stone in the churchyard asserts her to have been "a woman of exemplary virtue, a

tender parent, and a sincere friend." The monument says nothing of her excellence as a wife; for it is on record that, after making her husband thoroughly miserable, and having been a "thorn in his flesh" for twenty years, she left his house, carrying off her husband's papers and journals, which she never returned. John Wesley never saw her, nor sought to see her, again. "By her outrageous jealousy and abominable temper," writes Southey, in his "Life of Wesley," "she deserves to be classed in a triad with Xanthippe and the wife of Job, as one of the three bad wives." Her death must have been a happy release for the great John. It appears that more than one separation took place between them. On different occasions she laid hands upon his person and tore his hair. When in the north of Ireland, a friend of Wesley's caught her in the act of trailing him on the floor by the hair of his head. "I felt," continues Hampson, in his account of the incident, "that I could have knocked the very soul out of her."

In the churchyard, too, lies Miss Lucy Warner, better known as the "Little Woman of Peckham." Her height was exactly thirty-two inches, her growth having been stunted at the early age of three. She kept a school. In the newer part of the churchyard a handsome tomb covers the remains of the notorious democrat, well known as "Equality Brown," of Peckham; and a gravestone also commemorates James Blake, who sailed round the world with Captain Cook.

Camden Chapel, situated on the northern side of Peckham Road, was built in 1797, and duly licensed as an Episcopal Chapel in 1829. Under the ministry of the late Rev. Henry Melvill, who occupied the pulpit for many years, it became one of the most famous places of worship in the metropolis for pulpit oratory of a high order. So great was Mr. Melvill's popularity, that very soon after his appointment, it was found necessary to make a considerable enlargement in the building, and transepts were made at the north end, thus giving to the edifice the ground-plan of the letter T. A writer in a critique on Camden Chapel and its pastor, in the "Metropolitan Pulpit" (1839), remarks: "The Rev. Henry Melvill, of Camden Chapel, is the most popular preacher in London. I am doing no injustice to other ministers, whether in the Church or out of it, in saying this. The fact is not only susceptible of proof, but is often proved in a manner which all must admit to be conclusive. When a sermon is advertised to be preached by Mr. Melvill, the number of strangers attracted to the particular place is invariably greater than is ever drawn together in the same church or chapel when any of the other popular ministers in London are appointed to preach on a precisely similar occasion." Mr. Melvill, who was subsequently rector of Barnes, died in 1871, and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, of which he had been for some years a canon residentiary.

A new district church, dedicated to St. George, on the south bank of the Surrey Canal, after the model of one of the churches in Rome, was built about 1830. There are few churches in or near London which have witnessed more extraordinary changes in their immediate neighbourhood than this. Originally built among green fields, with a windmill close at hand, it now stands in the midst of a teeming population. The edifice, which is in the Grecian style of architecture, was built from the designs of Mr. Bedford. A new bridge over the Surrey Canal, close by the church, was erected in the year 1862.

Previous to 1827, the parochial business was carried on either at the workhouse or the vestryroom of St. Giles's Church. In that year was erected a vestry-hall, which was in use for a little over forty years. The building, however, seems to have been ill adapted for the transaction of parochial business, and in 1873 it was superseded by a new hall, a large and imposing edifice on the north side of old Church Street, at the corner of Havil Street, and occupying the site of old Havil House. The style of architecture is that known as Renaissance, and the general arrangement of the design is a centre with two wings. The principal front is constructed entirely of Bath stone, and the side front of white Suffolk bricks, with cornices, string-courses, &c. The principal front is divided into two storeys, the lowermost of which has considerable dignity imparted to it by reason of its being raised some four feet above the level of the roadway. On the ground storey, the centre has rusticated piers, with Doric granite columns and a recessed portico, leading up to which is a flight of stone steps, with ornamental pillar-lamps on each side. The upper storey consists of coupled Ionic pilasters, with a central composition comprising a circular-headed window, flanked by two narrow recessed openings, and an elliptical projecting balcony; the whole is surmounted by an attic having a pedimented clock-storey, on either side of which are groups of statuary representing "Law" and "Prudence," while a figure of "Justice" crowns the summit of the pediment. On the pedestals of the

balustrades, over each group of coupled pilasters, are also emblematical figures of "Science" and "Industry." The roof of this central portion of the building is of ornamental design, with a balustrade. Each of the wings of the main front is divided into three openings on both sides.

At the western end of Church Street and the southern end of Camberwell Road is an oblong plot of ground, rather over an acre in extent—laid out in grass-plats, planted with trees, shrubs, and flowers, and enclosed with iron railings—rejoicing in the name of Camberwell Park. This spot, formerly known as Camberwell Green, was in bygone times the scene of an annual fair, almost rivalling in riotousness that at Greenwich, which we have already described. ([fn. 1](#))

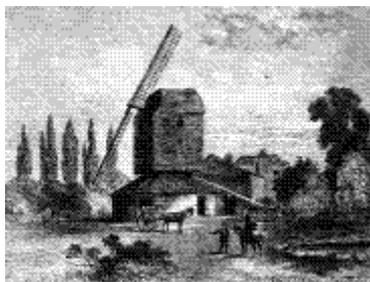
How, or at what time, Camberwell Fair became established is a matter of uncertainty. Bray, in his "History of Surrey," says that it was appointed to be held on the 9th of August, and to terminate on the 1st of September—the feast of St. Giles, the patron saint; thus it must have lasted for twentythree days. In recent times, however, it was held on the 18th, 19th, and 20th of August. The fair appears to have been held in the High Street, "opposite 'The Cock' public-house," before the Green was fixed upon as its headquarters.

The following account of these saturnalia is taken from the "Annual Register," 1807:—"The sports of Camberwell Fair began, and were continued till Thursday, the 20th, with more animation than usual. An unlucky accident happened on Wednesday to a black magician, who professed to be acquainted with the secrets of nature, to be descended from the magi of Persia, and to profess the highest veneration for the Greubes or worshippers of fire. In addition to his legerdemain, he exhibited a puppet-show, in the last scene of which a battle was introduced between Lucifer and Buonaparte. As the infernal king was conveying the effigy of the Corsican to the region of fire, an unlucky boy blew up a sausage-pan in the rear of the magician's booth, and Buonaparte's catastrophe was attended by real fire, for the flames, in consequence of the explosion, caught the hangings of the booth, and the disciple of Zoroaster found himself inclosed by the element he so much admired. In vain he summoned water to his aid; none could be obtained, and he was compelled to bury the devil, &c., in the ruins. Fortunately, the flames did not communicate to the adjoining shows, but the magician was necessitated to begin his incantations *de novo*."

The *Observer* of August 19th, 1832, thus describes the fair:—"Camberwell Fair.—The revels of this fair commenced yesterday with much spirit, notwithstanding the weather was so unfavourable. Richardson's theatre occupies a large space of ground in the centre of the Green, and is fitted up with a degree of splendour we could not have anticipated. Alger's 'Crown and Anchor' tavern, as usual, eclipses all others of its contemporaries; it ranges from one end of the Green to the other, and its interior is ornamented with chandeliers, variegated lamps, flags, banners, &c., which present a very splendid effect. There are numerous other sources of amusement to satiate the appetites of the public, and the Bonifaces anticipate a plentiful harvest should the weather but prove congenial."

The following curious particulars of Camberwell Fair are taken from Colburn's "Kalendar of Amusements" (1840):—"Camberwell Fair is one of the most amusing and orderly occurring near the metropolis. It continues in vogue three days, during which, precisely till the departure of daylight, it is attended by nursery-maids and their incipient masters and mistresses; and regularly till the return of the same, by all sorts and sizes of animated nature. The green is filled with booths, displaying articles of *virtu* and *taste* (corn-craiks and gingerbread); with theatres which preserve the legitimate drama with a commendable fidelity, admitting no other change of performances than from *Douglas* to *Hamlet*, and from *Hamlet* to *Douglas*; and with shows of wonderful objects, which Nature continues to produce in order, most probably, to keep alive that spirit of curiosity in man which works so beneficially for that portion of society called the *Hamaxobii*, or cart-dwellers. These latter are said to be capable of only one occupation, viz., expatiating; and a profane proverb says that 'they are of no other use either to God or to man.' A story is told of one of them, who, observing a man fall into a river, continued to watch his struggles with a placid and unmoved countenance, exclaiming repeatedly in a low voice, 'If there *was* anybody *could* fling him this here rope, he might be saved!' It is, moreover, a common saying that they

never undress, from their perfect ignorance of the manner in which their garments should be resumed. The reply of Dr. Johnson to the political turncoat, who, in endeavouring to extenuate his knavery, exclaimed, 'You know I must live, doctor.' 'I see no necessity for that, sir!' might very judiciously be applied to them.



OLD CAMBERWELL MILL. (Copied, by permission, from Mr. Blanch's History of Camberwell.)

"At Camberwell fair a multitude of these creatures may be inspected; they are generally stationed in very prominent positions, making strange statements and assurances to the open-mouthed multitude beneath them, whom they incite by every possible inducement to pay their pence and judge for themselves. One of them, elevated so as to become the 'observed of all observers,' is revealing that, 'There is here, and only here, to be seen what you can see nowhere else, the lately-caught, and highly-accomplished young mermaid, about whom the Continental journals have written so ably. She combs her hair in the manner practised in China, and admires herself in a glass in the manner practised—everywhere. She has had the best instructors in every peculiarity of education, and can argue on any given subject, from the most popular way of preserving plums, down to the necessity of a change of Ministers. She plays the harp in the *new effect-ual* style prescribed by Mr. Bochsa, of whom we wished her to take lessons, but, having some mermaiden scruples, she begged to be provided with a less popular master. Being so clever and accomplished, she can't bear to be contradicted, and lately leaped out of her tub and floored a distinguished fellow of the Royal Zoological Society, who was pleased to be more curious and cunning than she was pleased to think agreeable. She has composed various poems for the periodicals, and airs with variations for the harp and piano, all very popular and pleasing. That gentleman (pointing to an organ-grinder, who appears to be watching for his cue) will favour you with one of his latest *mélanges*.' The organist strikes up 'God save the Queen,' which appears to make the people thoughtful, as if they had heard something similar to it before. The showman, observing this effect, orders the note to be changed. 'Jim Crow,' accompanied by a roar of laughter, is the result, at the subsiding of which, the sonorous voice of the showman is heard bellowing, 'Walk up, walk up, ladies and gentlemen; the entertainment is now a-going for to go to commence, and the charge has been *medicated*, according to the prudence of the times, to the sum of only one penny. *Vivat Regina!*' Before the curtain of one of the great national preservers of the two legitimate stock plays we have mentioned, chieftains in plaid, lawyers in symbolical black, kings in rabbit ermine, ladies in glazed satin, and gentlemen in disguise—
'Like Banquo's ghost, nine farrow of one sow,'
strut, shuffle, stamp, sweep, paddle, and *lavolt* across the stage to the time and tune of one solitary fiddler, the strings of whose *fidicula* might easily be mistaken for the *fidiculae*, or little cords, formerly used to stretch people on the rack. This person is provokingly broken in upon by 'Johnny Black,' of a rival house, who is propounding to a motley mob, whom he obligingly mistakes for ladies and gentlemen, a series of extemporaneous conundrums."



THE OLD HOUSE ON THE GREEN.

"Much pain," we read in the *Tourist*, for 1832, has been taken of late to do away with the annual fair held on the Green, which some of the inhabitants deem a nuisance; but, being at once a manorial right, and a source of emolument, it still remains." A petty session was held at Union Hall, in Southwark, in 1823, in order to put down Camberwell fair; but it was held to no purpose. The complaints of the inhabitants against the continuance of the fair were both loud and numerous; but it nevertheless survived, and was allowed to bring annual annoyance to the district till August, 1855, in which month the Green was encumbered for the last time with these disreputable gatherings. In that year the manorial rights in the Green were purchased by a subscription raised among the principal inhabitants of the district, and the place was transformed into a park, as above stated.

At the end of Camberwell Road, close by the park, is an inn called the "Father Redcap;" this hostelry, however, has no connection with the "Mother Redcap" of Camden Town, ([fn. 2](#)) or other places, but was probably only a flight of some publican's fancy.

There formerly stood on the south side of the Green a curious old mansion, which in its time had, doubtless, been the subject of many an idle tale. It was for many years known as the "old house on the Green." "The house itself," as Mr. Blanch tells us in his work before referred to, "was a fine specimen of a country mansion, and stood alone in its grandeur, as though it had found its way to Camberwell by mistake, so different was it from the surrounding buildings. Its magnificent hall was adorned with frescoes on walls and ceilings by the famous artist, Sir James Thornhill, and the noble oak staircase was of great width, and beautifully carved. The dining and drawing rooms were of unusual proportions, and elaborately worked medallion and other decorations were profusely arrayed. Tradition fixes this spot as the residence of Sir Christopher Wren, apparently without any authority, although local nomenclature has come to the rescue of tradition by naming the road which now occupies the site of this ancient structure as Wren Road."

The north side of the park is occupied chiefly by the Green-coat and National Schools. The building, which was erected in 1871, stands on the site of a former school, founded in 1721, by Mr. Henry Cornelisen, "for the Christian instruction of poor children."

The Camberwell Free Grammar School, which dated its foundation from the reign of James I., has become a thing of the past. It was instituted by the Rev. Edward Wilson, Vicar of Camberwell, and the rules and regulations drawn up by him are quaint and peculiar. The master, we are told, was to be "chosen out of the founder's kindred before any others;" he was to be "sound in religion, body, and mind; gentle, sober, honest, virtuous, discreet, and approved for a good facility in teaching—if such a one may be gotten!" The master was enjoined "to be careful of the behaviour of the scholars in coming in, going out, and sitting; and especially in repetition for good grace, countenance, pronunciation, and carriage, &c.; reverence abroad of scholars to their betters, elders, &c.; behaviour, courteous speech, and fair condition required, and reformation of such as do amiss." For all these varied duties and accomplishments the master was to receive "for his stipend, ten pounds yearly," and the best scholar was to "welcome him with

a Latin oration." Whatever the school may have been in its early days, it does not appear to have been in a very flourishing condition at the commencement of the present century. In 1824 the governors sold and conveyed to the Charity Commissioners a portion of the charity-land as an addition to the churchyard of the parish; and in 1842 an information was filed in the Court of Chancery against the governors and the then master of the school, with respect to its past and future management. In consequence of these proceedings, in 1845 the school buildings were razed to the ground, and for nearly eighteen years the land on which they stood was let out for grazing purposes. In 1864 another application was made to the Charity Commissioners, under the Charitable Trusts Act, on behalf of certain parishioners of Camberwell, which resulted in the whole of the funds of the charity being absorbed by the official trustees of Charitable Funds.

In Westmoreland Place, contiguous to the main road, is the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Asylum. Of the many valuable institutions with which London abounds, few deserve a higher place in the estimation of the philanthropist (though few are less known) than the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society, of which we have already had occasion to speak in our account of Upper Holloway. (fn. 3) It was established in the year 1807, for the purpose of giving life-pensions of ten guineas and five guineas per annum to poor, aged, and infirm Protestants of either sex, and of every denomination. The almshouses here were commenced in 1834. The edifice is of brick, with stucco mouldings and ornaments, having an embattled centre, flanked by two towers. A low pointed gateway leads through this part of the structure to a quadrangle with a lawn in the centre, and surrounded by buildings in the same style.

The rural character of Camberwell at the latter part of the eighteenth century may be gathered from the fact that the trees and hedges of the village are alluded to in the vestry minutes; and in 1782 caterpillars so abounded in the parish, that the overseers spent £10 in "apprehending them," at the rate of sixpence per bushel. The caterpillars were described as being dangerous to the public in general. "The Camberwell Beauty," the delight of entomologists, is still one of the finest butterflies of the season; but it is now rarely seen. It was most abundant when Camberwell was a straggling suburban parish of about 4,000 inhabitants. But Camberwell is now a congeries of streets, and forms part of the great metropolis itself.

Close by the Camberwell Station of the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway, stood Myatt's Farm, a picturesque building in the midst of gardens, celebrated for their strawberries as lately as the present reign. Camberwell, in fact, was, down to a comparatively recent date, famous for its flowers and fruit. In Cold Harbour Lane, which leads from the southern end of the High Street towards Brixton, are still located one or two well-known florists. In this lane was Strawberry Hall, now pulled down to form a site for Loughborough Park Chapel; beyond this was the "river" Effra, which, having been diverted from its original channel, or otherwise effaced, is now kept in remembrance by a modern thoroughfare called Effra Road. Cold Harbour—a name by no means rare in the rural districts—is supposed to have originally signified a place of entertainment for travellers and drovers who required rest for their horses or cattle.

At the foot of Denmark Hill, or rather at the fork made by the junction of that road with Cold Harbour Lane, stood Denmark Hill Grammar School, "a handsome and imposing structure," with its extensive grounds skirting the parish boundary, and which "was reckoned among the *maisons grandes* of Camberwell." The grounds were enclosed by a high brick wall; and the house itself, which faced Denmark Hill, stood only a few yards from the road. It was a lofty structure, built of red and white bricks, with dressings of Portland stone, and the interior contained some curious and quaint carvings and frescoes.

At the beginning of the present century there lived at Grove Hill Dr. John Lettson, one of the most extraordinary men of his day. As a Quaker physician he was most successful, realising sometimes as much as £12,000 a year. He was as liberal and philanthropic as he was wealthy. At Grove Hill he entertained some of the most eminent *literati* of his time. He used to sign his prescriptions "I. Lettson." This signature occasioned the following epigram—
"When any patients call in haste,
I physics, bleeds, and sweats 'em;

If after that they choose to die,
Why, what cares I?
I let's 'em."

Dr. John Coakley Lettsom was the son of a West Indian planter, and was born in the year 1744. Having completed his education in England, he was apprenticed to a Yorkshire apothecary. He afterwards returned to the West Indies, and settled as a medical practitioner at Tortola. After about five or six months, he again found his way into Europe. In 1769, he was admitted a licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of London, and in the following year elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Dr. Lettsom's rise in his profession was rapid; but whilst realising a handsome fortune, he was not forgetful of the wants of his needy brethren, and the poorer order of clergy and struggling literary men received from him not only gratuitous advice, but substantial aid; whilst his contributions to charitable institutions placed him in the front rank of earnest and practical philanthropists. Dr. Lettsom deserves also to be remembered as the original proprietor of the sea-bathing Infirmary at Margate, which dates from 1792 or thereabouts. Numerous anecdotes have been published about the celebrated physician, but the following will sufficiently illustrate his proverbial generosity, which we tell on the authority of Mr. Blanch:—"As he was travelling on one occasion in the neighbourhood of London, a highwayman stopped his carriage; but from the awkward and constrained manner of the intruder, the doctor correctly imagined the young man was somewhat of a novice in his new vocation, and that he was an outlaw more from necessity than from choice; and so it turned out. The doctor interested himself in his behalf, and eventually obtained him a commission in the army. On one of his benevolent excursions, the doctor found his way into the squalid garret of a poor woman who had seen better days. With the language and deportment of a lady, she begged the physician to give her a prescription. After inquiring carefully into her case, he wrote on a slip of paper to the overseers of the parish: 'A shilling per diem for Mrs. Moreton. Money, not physic, will cure her.'" Unhappily, though Dr. Lettsom had been successful in his profession, his latter years were darkened with adversity.

Dr. Lettsom's house is called by Priscilla Wakefield, in 1809, "an elegant villa." She is at the pains of describing it as follows:—"The front is adorned with emblematical figures of Flora and the Seasons. One of the chief ornaments of the house is a noble library, in which are tastefully disposed the busts of many distinguished literary characters. The gardens and pleasure-grounds are laid out in a pleasing manner, and display a variety of statues and models of ancient temples. That of the Sibyls is on the model of one at Tivoli, and is supported on the trunks of eighteen oak-trees, around which are entwined ivy, virgin's bower, honeysuckle, and other climbing shrubs."

The author of "The British Traveller," in describing the parish in 1819, makes no mention of anybody or anything in Camberwell further than this, that it contained the residence of the "late famous Dr. Lettsom." The house is described in Manning and Bray's "History of Surrey" as "standing on a considerable eminence, rising gradually for about three-quarters of a mile from the village of Camberwell, and passing through an avenue of elms retaining the name of Camberwell Grove, part of the plantations which belonged to the house that was Sir Thomas Bond's, and afterwards Lord Trevor's." This, however, is more than doubtful, as Sir Thomas Bond's house was situated in Peckham, at least one mile distant.

Scott, the "bard of Amwell," inscribed one of his lesser poems to his hospitable friend, Dr. Lettsom; and Boswell, who was a frequent visitor at Grove Hill, in an ode to Charles Dilly, celebrated at once the beauties of the physician's country seat and its owner's humane disposition:—

"My cordial friend, still prompt to lend
Your cash when I have need on't;
We both must bear our load of care—
At least we talk and read on't—

"Yet are we gay in every way,
Not minding where the joke lie;
On Saturday at bowls we play,

At Camberwell, with Coakley.

"Methinks you laugh to hear but half
The name of Dr. Lettsom;
From him of good—talk, liquors, food—
His guests will always get some.

"And guests has he, in every degree
Of decent estimation;
His liberal mind holds all mankind
As an exalted nation.

"O'er Lettsom's cheer we've met a peer—
A peer, no less than Lansdowne!
Of whom each dull and envious skull
Absurdly cries—"The man's down!"

"Lettsom we view a Quaker true:
'Tis clear he's so in one sense;
His spirit strong and ever young
Refutes pest Priestley's nonsense.

"In fossils he is deep, we see,
Nor knows beasts, fishes, birds ill!
With plants not few, some from Pelew,
And wondrous mangel-wurzel!

"West Indian bred, warm heart, cold head,
The City's first physician;
By schemes humane, want, sickness, pain,
To aid is his ambition.

"From terrace high, he feasts his eye,
When practice grants a furlough,
And while it roves o'er Dulwich groves,
Looks down—even upon Thurlow."

Dr. Lettsom's house was subsequently occupied by Mr. Charles Baldwin, the proprietor of the *St. James's Chronicle*, and afterwards of the *Standard* newspaper.

Camberwell Grove is said to be the spot on which George Barnwell murdered his uncle: an event which furnished Lillo with the plot of his tragedy. Fountain Cottage—which was till very recently commemorated by Fountain Terrace, a name which the Metropolitan Board of Works have thought fit to abolish—was fixed upon as the residence of the unfortunate uncle. A writer, at the commencement of the present century, informs his readers that "in the Grove (at Camberwell) was committed that tragic act, recorded by Lillo, in the drama of *George Barnwell*." And, again, in the *European Magazine* for June, 1803, it is recorded that "at the fatal spot where this murder was committed rises a stream of limpid water, which falls into the canal (at Fountain Cottage) through a vase on which a naiad, in ornamental stone, reclines. It is this spring," the writer further tells us, with an amount of simplicity and ignorance which is charming, "which gives the name of Camberwell to the village so called!" In the "Memoirs of George Barnwell, by a descendant of the family," published in 1810, the author, in purporting to give "a full, true, and particular account" of the whole affair, fixes upon Camberwell Grove as the residence of the uncle and the scene of the murder. Maurice, the historian of Hindostan, in his poem entitled "Grove Hill," thus apostrophises this touching and romantic story:—

"Ye towering elms, on whose majestic brows
A hundred rolling years have shed their snows,
Admit me to your dark, sequester'd reign,
To roam with contemplation's studious train!
Your haunts I seek, nor glow with other fires
Than those which friendship's ardent warmth inspires;
No savage murderer with a gleaming blade—
No *Barnwell* to pollute your sacred shade!"

In the prologue to Lillo's tragedy, "as acted at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, by his Majesty's servants, in 1731," it is openly stated that the tragedy is based upon the original ballad of "George Barnwell:"—

"Forgive us, then, if we attempt to show,
In artless strains, a tale of private woe.
A London 'prentice ruined is my theme,
Drawn from the famed old song that bears his name."

According to Bishop Percy, the original ballad was printed at least as early as the seventeenth century. In that production Barnwell's uncle is described as a wealthy grazier, dwelling in Ludlow:—

"I an uncle have,
Who doth in Ludlow dwell;
He is a grazier, which in wealth
Doth all the rest excel."

The ballad also describes the murder as having been committed in a wood near that town; and the Ludlow Guide-book notices the circumstance as traditional there, and the very barn and homestead, a short distance on the left before entering Ludlow from the Hereford Road, are still pointed out as having been the residence of the victim. The ballad, however, lays the scene of Barnwell's dissipation in the metropolis. In Shoreditch lived Mrs. Millwood, who led him astray:—

"George Barnwell, then, quoth she,
Do thou to Shoreditch come,
And ask for Mrs. Millwood's house,
Next door unto the 'Gun.'!"

Readers of James Smith's "Rejected Addresses" will not forget how the wretched woman Millwood suggests to the profligate apprentice the murder of his wealthy but hard-hearted relative. The poet tells us:—

"A pistol he got from his love,
'Twas loaded with powder and bullet;
He trudged off to Camberwell Grove,
But wanted the courage to pull it.
'There's Nunkey as fat as a hog,
While I am as lean as a lizard;
Here's at you, you stingy old dog!
And he whips a big knife in his gizzard.

"All you who attend to my song,
A terrible end of the farce shall see,
If you join the inquisitive throng
That followed poor George to the Marshalsea.
'If Millwood were here, dash my wigs,'
Quoth he, 'I would pummel and lam her well;
Had I stuck to my prunes and my figs,
I ne'er had stuck Nunkey at Cam'erwell.'"

"Lillo's drama," writes the author of the History of Camberwell, "shows us the culprit, in companionship with his heartless seducer, led from a London prison to the scaffold; and Dr. Rimbault, writing in 1858, tells us that some few years since an old parochial parchment was said to have come to light, showing that George Barnwell had been the last criminal hanged at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, before the Middlesex

executions were, more generally than before, ordered at Tyburn; yet the ballad, of much older date than the play, says that Barnwell was not gibbeted there, but sent 'beyond seas,' where he subsequently suffered capital punishment for some fresh crime. In any case," he adds, somewhat sceptically, "we must disclaim, on behalf of Camberwell, the *honour* of the *Barnwell* connection. If such a person ever did commit such a crime as that stated, no reliable evidence whatever has been produced to connect Camberwell with it."

A writer in Hone's "Every-day Book" remarks:—"When Mr. Ross performed the character of George Barnwell, in 1752, the son of an eminent merchant was so struck with certain resemblances to his own perilous position (arising from the arts of a real Millwood), that his agitation brought on a dangerous illness, in the course of which he confessed his error, was forgiven by his father, and was furnished with the means of repairing the pecuniary wrongs he had privately done to his employer. Mr. Ross says: 'Though I never knew his name, nor saw him to my knowledge, I had, for nine or ten years, at my benefit, a note sealed up with ten guineas, with these words:—"A tribute of gratitude from one who was highly obliged, and saved from ruin, by witnessing Mr. Ross's performance of George Barnwell.'"" Few persons, on reading this fact, will censure the stage, as such, as being necessarily immoral in its tendency.

In the last century, the Camberwell Tea Gardens, attached to a place of public entertainment called the Grove House, were largely patronised by the lads and lasses of the metropolis. The assemblyroom—which is now known as Camberwell Hall—has been the scene of many local balls, which can scarcely, however, be styled fashionable. Charles Dickens, in his "Sketches by Boz," gives an amusing account of a ball held here by certain "aspiring" local residents. *Fêtes* of all kinds were held within the spacious grounds of Grove House. With the Grove House Tavern is associated the history of the Camberwell Club, which, like all similar associations of the past century, was exclusively social. The club—which numbered among its members clergymen, lawyers, and merchants—held its meetings at this famous house of entertainment; and, as Mr. Blanch informs us, "snug dinners, stray balls, and quarterly feasts were the principal *duties* which the members were called upon to perform; and right well did they acquit themselves, if report be true." Political meetings were sometimes held here; and the march of "Citizen" Tierney's supporters thither in 1802 forms the subject of a spirited engraving published at the time, beneath which is inscribed—

"The glorious triumph shouting mobs proclaim,
And the thronged Grove House echoes back my fame."

Mr. Tierney, the great friend of Charles James Fox, was elected M.P. for Southwark in 1802, and sat for that place in two or three Parliaments. In a broad-sheet published by Gilray, in 1797, he is represented as the "Friend of Humanity"—the same who was satirised by Canning, a short time previously, in the "Anti-Jacobin."



DR. LETTSOM'S HOUSE, GROVE HILL.

On the lower Spring-field, on the west side of the Grove, formerly stood the Camberwell Collegiate School, an establishment formed on the principles of King's College. The building was erected in 1834, from the designs of Mr. Henry Roberts, the architect of the Fishmongers' Hall; it was somewhat in the Tudor style, constructed of white brick, with stone dressings, the principal feature being the cloister which faced the entrance. The school was opened in 1835, as a proprietary establishment, and for some time was moderately successful; but the proximity of Dulwich College and other educational

establishments seriously impeded the progress of the college, and in 1867 it was closed, and the land sold for building purposes.

The dwellers in Camberwell, and especially in that region where it passes into the Grove, ought to feel grateful to Mr. William Black for the dignity and interest which he has conferred upon it in his romance of "Madcap Violet." What Leigh Hunt, Thackeray, and other writers have done for the "Old Court Suburb" of Kensington, Mr. Black has done for this charming part of suburban London. The broad, tree-bordered slope of the Grove, where fine houses to the right and left are embowered among leaves, has been chosen by the author of "Madcap Violet" as the scene of some of the incidents narrated in that romance of modern life.

Camberwell Grove, the sylvan glades of Dulwich and Norwood, and hilly Sydenham, were favourite resorts of the great painter, William Blake, in his early years.



CAMBERWELL GROVE.

In Champion Hill, which extends from Camberwell to Lordship Lane, the nightingale is sometimes heard; and Hone, in his "Year-Book," mentions that this bird was in full song here in 1832.

Hone's "Year-Book" also mentions the "Foxunder-the-Hill," at the foot of Denmark Hill—then the Sunday resort of many town-immured beings—as being gradually surrounded by spruce villas, &c. He styles Herne Hill "the elysium of many of our merchants and traders. On the left," he adds, "is a quiet lane, such as Byron would have loved, leading to Dulwich."

The "Fox-under-the-Hill" still remains a wellknown Camberwell sign, although the old tavern has been demolished to give place to one more in accord with modern ideas. That the neighbourhood was at one time the haunt of "Reynard" may be inferred from the fact that a thoroughfare close by is called Dog Kennel Lane. The tavern was formerly called "Little Denmark Hall," there being at that time another house of entertainment known as "Great Denmark Hall," which was subsequently converted into one or more private houses. The "Fox-under-the-Hill" was formerly the starting-point of the Dulwich patrol.

Of the "old families" of Camberwell not yet mentioned by us, we have the Cherrys, descended from the De Cheries of Picardy and Normandy—the first of the family who settled in Camberwell being Sir Francis Cherry, Queen Elizabeth's Ambassador to Russia in 1598, of whose proceedings an amusing account is given in the "Egerton Papers" as published by the Camden Society. We have again the De Crespignys, who came from France, as Protestant refugees, in the reign of William III., though they did not settle in Camberwell until early in the eighteenth century. Champion Lodge, at the foot of Denmark

Hill, was built in 1717, by Mr. Claude de Crespigny. In 1804, the Prince of Wales visited Champion Lodge, and of course a great *fête* was made on the occasion, and the owner of the house was soon afterwards made a baronet. The park had originally an area of about thirty acres. The house, noticeable for the fine iron gates and the stately cedars in front, was pulled down in 1841, and the site is now occupied by rows of houses. Sir Claude de Crespigny was a Fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and married the gifted, as well as accomplished, daughter of Mr. J. Clarke, of Rigton, Derbyshire. It was this Lady de Crespigny who wrote the admirable lines which were placed over a grotto standing in the grounds of Champion Lodge, and dedicated to Contemplation.

There were also the Drapers, who came from Nottinghamshire—Robert Draper, of Camberwell, being page of the Jewel Office to Henry VIII.; and his nephew, Sir Christopher Draper, being Lord Mayor of London in 1566—his three daughters marrying respectively, Sir W. Webbe, Sir Wolstan Dixie, and Sir H. Billingsley, all subsequently Lord Mayors in their turn.

Of the "local worthies" of Camberwell not already referred to by us, we may mention the Rev. Dr. Richard Parr, who was rector of this parish for thirty-eight years, commencing with 1653, and who was the chaplain and biographer of Archbishop Usher; Dr. Chandler, a famous Nonconformist divine in the early part of the eighteenth century, whose theological writings excited great attention, and evoked the high commendations of Archbishop Wake; and Dr. William B. Collyer, who attained great fame as a preacher in the earlier part of the present century.

Towards the close of the year 1840, Thomas Hood—the author of "The Song of the Shirt"—took up his residence in Camberwell; the house to which he first brought his family was No. 8, South Place, now 181, Camberwell New Road. He afterwards removed to No. 2, Union Row (now 266, High Street), where he occupied the drawingroom floor. Hood, who was a real wit and humourist in the best sense of the word, was born in London in 1798. His father was a native of Scotland, and for many years acting partner in the firm of Vernor, Hood, and Sharpe, extensive booksellers and publishers. "There was a dash of ink in my blood," he writes; "my father wrote two novels, and my brother was decidedly of a literary turn, to the great disquietude, for a time, of an anxious parent." Young Hood finished his education at Wanostrocht's Academy, at Camberwell; and removed thence to a merchant's counting-house in the City, where he realised his own inimitable sketch of the boy "Just set up in Business:"—

"Time was I sat upon a lofty stool,
At lofty desk, and with a clerkly pen,
Began each morning at the stroke of ten
To write in Bell and Co.'s commercial school,
In Warnford Court, a shady nook and cool,
The favourite retreat of merchant men;
Yet would my quill turn vagrant even then,
And take stray dips in the Castalian pool.
Now double entry—now a flowery trope—
Mingling poetic honey with trade wax:
Blogg, Brothers—Milton—Grote and Prescott—Pope—
Bristles and Hogg—Glyn, Mills, and Halifax—
Rogers and Towgood—Hemp—the Bard of Hope—
Barilla—Byron—Tallow—Burns, and Flax."

Mr. Hood's first work was anonymous—his "Odes and Addresses to Great People"—a little, thin, mean-looking sort of a foolscap sub-octavo of poems, with nothing but wit and humour to recommend it. Coleridge was delighted with the work, and taxed Charles Lamb by letter with the authorship. His next work was "A Plea for the Midsummer Fairies," a serious poem of infinite beauty, full of fine passages and of promise. The "Plea" was followed by "Whims and Oddities"—the forerunner of the *Comic Annual*. Then came the "Epping Hunt" and the "Dream of Eugene Aram;" "Tylney Hall," a novel; and "Hood's Own; or, Laughter from Year to Year," a volume of comic lucubrations, "with an infusion of New Blood for General Circulation." His "Song of the Shirt" has been sung through the whole length and breadth of

the three kingdoms. During the first year of his residence at Camberwell, he was much amused at witnessing "all the fun of the fair," which then annually ran riot at the latter end of August. In a letter, written from "2, Union Row, High Street, Camberwell," about this time, Hood says: "We have much more comfortable lodgings, and the 'busses pass the door constantly, being in the high road, fifty or a hundred yards townwards of the 'Red Cap,' at the Green. I have a room to myself, which will be worth £20 a year to me—for a little disconcerts my nerves." In another letter from this place, dated April 13th, 1841, Hood writes:—"Camberwell is the best air I could have." At the close of this year he removed to St. John's Wood, where he died about four years later, at the early age of forty-seven.

The loyalty and military spirit of Camberwell, as a constituent portion of the county of Surrey, appear to have been maintained, without interruption, since the days of "good Queen Bess," Camberwell having then furnished a valiant quota to the forces collected to oppose the attempted Spanish invasion; and having again, after the lapse of more than two centuries—namely, in 1798—distinguished itself by forming a "Military Association," under the presidency and command of Claude Champion de Crespigny—the lineal representative of one of the "old families" mentioned above; which Association, in 1804—when the country unanimously resented the menaces of Buonaparte—developed itself into a formal volunteer corps.

In point of population, Camberwell offers, perhaps, the most striking example of increase which can be found throughout the metropolitan suburban area—the number of its inhabitants having grown from 7,059, in 1801, to the astonishing amount of 111,306 in 1871. It seems, indeed, that, with the dawn of this century, Camberwell suddenly broke through the trammels which had been imposed upon suburban buildings during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and had made their prescriptive influence felt throughout the eighteenth. Happy would it have been, both for the citizens and the city of London, had those laws been maintained and enforced in a salutary, judicious, and moderate manner. Then, it has been remarked, we should not have seen, as we do now, so many square miles of fertile agricultural ground covered with useless bricks and mortar, the crowded habitations of a seething population; then, indeed, we should not have had miles of beggarly two-storeyed tenements swallowing up all the open spaces about the metropolis, but should have adopted a system of building more consonant with the principles of sanitary laws, as well as with those of social and political economy.

In few matters, during the first half of the present century, has there been a greater change than in the mode and pace of travelling; and abundant illustration of this fact is shown by a retrospect of the character of the communication between London and Camberwell as existing in the years 1796 and 1877. In the former year, one Camberwell coach was advertised to leave the "Anchor and Vine," Charing Cross, twice daily, and another to leave the "Kings and Key," Fleet Street, three times daily. Now, besides omnibuses, whose name is legion, there are several railway-stations in Camberwell, and, likewise, a line of tramway from Westminster to Camberwell Green and New Cross, besides other tramway lines from Camberwell to Blackfriars and the City. By means of its railway and tramway communication, in addition to the ordinary omnibus service, Camberwell is now placed within easy reach of the central portion of the metropolis.

In the Peckham Road, by which we now proceed, we pass, on our left, one of the two asylums licensed for the reception of lunatics in Camberwell. This asylum, known as Camberwell House, with its surrounding pleasure and garden grounds, occupies a space of some twenty acres, part of which is laid out in a park-like manner, the remainder being kept for the use of the patients who take an interest in garden pursuits. The principal building, formerly known as Alfred House, was erected by Mr. Wanostrocht for a school, which he conducted for many years with eminent success. The house was afterwards used by the Royal Naval School, which, as we have already seen, was subsequently removed to New Cross. (fn. 4) The Royal Naval School was projected by Captain Dickson; was started by voluntary contributions, headed by the handsome donation of £10,000 from the late Dr. Bell; and had for its object the education of the sons of those naval and marine officers whose scanty incomes did not allow them to provide a first-rate education for their boys. Its office was represented, from 1831 to 1833, by a second-floor room in Jermyn Street, St. James's; and here its founders and projectors regularly met on board days, and worked

for the advancement of the interests of the Royal Naval School. They were famous men who went up those stairs to the humble committee-room in Jermyn Street—men whose names are household words amongst us now, and whom history will remember. William IV., "the Sailor King," was interested in this school, and met there Yorke, Blackwood, Keats, Hardy, Codrington, and Cockburn—brave admirals and famous "old salts," some of whom could recollect, mayhap, what a struggle it was to live like a gentleman once, and bring up their boys as gentlemen's sons, on officer's pay. Alfred House was for a time the institution which uprose from the committee's first deliberations, from voluntary contributions, and unaided by that Government grant which it deserved as an impetus in the first instance, and which to this day, and for reasons inexplicable to all connected with the service and the school, it has been unable to obtain.

Footnotes

- 1 See *ante*, p. 202.
- 2 See Vol. V., p. 310.
- 3 See Vol. V., p. 395.
- 4 See *ante*, p. 247.